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Tigiwon Road Closed for Hazard Tree and Fuels Work

Minturn, CO (Wednesday, June 22, 2011) – White River National Forest officials announced today that the Tigiwon Road (FDR 707) will be closed to vehicles through October 15 to allow for hazard tree removal and other vegetation treatments in response to the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic.

According to Eagle/Holy Cross District Ranger Dave Neely, “We were informed last week that the contractor would be able to mobilize immediately to accomplish this critical work. Because of the design of this road there is really no way to safely accommodate both the logging activity and the volume of traffic Tigiwon normally carries. Since we absolutely must deal with the dead timber and associated public safety and resource issues, we really have no alternative other than to close the road and get the work done as quickly as possible.”

The closure will affect access to several popular recreation sites, including Half Moon Campground, Tigiwon Community House, the Cross Creek trailhead, and the Half Moon trailhead, which is the most direct route to Mount of the Holy Cross, a popular Colorado fourteener.

“We understand and regret the inconvenience to Forest visitors,” said Neely. “However, we simply can’t ignore the risks associated with all this dead and dying timber and rely on hope that a tree doesn’t go through someone’s windshield, or that lightning doesn’t strike a pile of jackstrawed timber. Conditions have become hazardous enough along this road that we’ve been discussing a closure for public safety reasons even if the logging wasn’t happening.”

Officials expect that the closure will allow completion of the work in one season, and that normal access will be restored by the October 15 date, if not sooner. “It seemed

better to concentrate the impact in one season rather than potentially drag it out over multiple years,” said Neely.

The Forest Service recommends that those seeking to climb Holy Cross this summer sit down with a map and guidebook to choose an alternative route appropriate for their skill and fitness level. Options from the south are longer and more strenuous than the direct route, but still offer a great opportunity for adventure. Those seeking to access Cross Creek trail may do so on foot. According to Neely, “At this time we’ve not technically closed the road to foot, horse, or bike traffic; however if public use becomes a problem for either the safe operation of the logger or for the safety of visitors we may close the entire area to entry. We really hope folks will understand what we’re trying to do and choose another of the many beautiful areas we have to recreate in this summer.”

In addition to the Tigiwon Road, hazard tree mitigation is taking place on roads and trails across the Eagle/Holy Cross District throughout the summer. Work is underway along Red Sandstone road (FR 700) north of Vail and Hardscrabble road (FR 413) south of Eagle with the goal of accomplishing as much work as possible while snow still blocks these routes through the high country. Once routes become snow-free, visitors should expect interim delays or temporary closures to allow for safe operations. Hand crews have also been operating on the North Trail in Vail and East Lake Creek Trail south of Edwards. Visitors should respect all signs and safety information provided by work crews. Information on where work is occurring will be regularly updated on the White River National Forest website.

“After a lot of effort in planning and layout, it’s a relief to see these hazards coming down,” said Neely. “We hope people appreciate how big a problem we’re trying to deal with and that we’re doing the best we can to balance public safety with public access to our National Forests.”

Please contact the Holy Cross Ranger Station at 970-827-5715 with any questions.